

The Global Ghost Gear Initiative would like to thank the co-facilitators, Palau and Denmark, as well as the Conference host countries of Portugal and Kenya for their leadership on SDG14 and we welcome the opportunity to work together to advance ocean conservation priorities in the lead up to the June conference.

Sustainable Development Goal 14 target 1 calls on all countries to significantly reduce marine litter of all kinds by 2025 – so in less than 10 years’ time. Now really is the time for urgent action.

The marine pollution debate often focusses on land-based sources of marine debris that make up the overwhelming majority of all marine litter. However as highlighted by a few Member States yesterday such as Canada, galvanizing action around sea-based sources of marine litter is equally important.

Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) or ‘ghost fishing gear’ accounts for 46% to 70% of surface floating macro-plastics in the ocean by weight. Ghost gear has been found to be the most potent threat to marine life, a serious problem for the health of our oceans and fishers safety, a significant source of marine plastics and micro-plastics, and the direct cause of a substantial decline in fish stock levels globally.

In 2017 the Global Ghost Gear Initiative launched the Best Practice Framework for the Management of Fishing Gear, the first comprehensive practical guide aiming to address gear loss. In 2018, the Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear were endorsed by the UN FAO Committee of Fisheries, at the end of last year Canada launched the \$8.3 million Sustainable Fisheries Solutions and Retrieval Support Contribution Program for ALDFG work. This year IMO and FAO are launching alongside Norway the innovative GloLitter Partnerships Programme focused on sea-based sources of litter.

We must maximise these opportunities and see this action reflected in the outcomes of the Interactive Dialogues, the Informal Preparatory Working Groups, and Political Declaration. The Global Ghost Gear Initiative believes that internationally recognized best practices for the management of fishing gear must be implemented, so that we can achieve a net reduction of ghost gear – the most costly and dangerous type of marine debris – in our ocean.